Office of the Fire Marshal

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QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE COMPANY PERSONNEL

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GUIDELINE

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OFM Section: Fire Safety Standards at (416) 325-3100

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Abstract

The proper operation of fire protection systems is a vital component in ensuring fire safety for persons and property in the community. It is the responsibility of the owner to conduct tests and maintenance on these systems on a regular basis. In employing service personnel to carry out this work, there must be some assurance that the work is done in a competent and professional manner.

This guideline sets out certain criteria to use in assessing the qualifications of service company personnel and delineates the roles of the municipal fire department, owner and service company personnel to help achieve this goal.

1.0 SCOPE

This guideline has been established to aid in the assessment of qualifications for service company personnel performing work on fire protection systems. Currently, Subsection 1.1.5. of the Fire Code sets out qualifications for persons performing tests, inspections and maintenance on fire alarm systems. There are no similar criteria for persons performing service maintenance on other systems such as sprinkler, emergency power or special extinguishing systems.

This guideline provides criteria that should be considered in determining the competency of maintenance personnel and service companies and the roles of the local fire department, owner and service company in relation to the requirements of the Fire Code.

2.0 BACKGROUND

There are several areas in the Fire Code where recognized standards are referenced with respect to maintenance and testing for particular fire and life safety systems, such as commercial cooking equipment and portable extinguishers. These standards sometimes refer to certain minimum qualifications for service personnel. The Fire Code references these standards to incorporate the test and maintenance procedures in order to ensure continued operation of the system in question. Some of these standards have provision for the training and qualification of service personnel. For example, NFPA-96, "Ventilation Control and Fire Protection of Commercial Cooking Operations", states in Clause 8-2.1 that inspection and servicing be carried out by properly trained and qualified persons. Another standard, NFPA 10, "Portable Fire Extinguishers", has similar requirements in Clause 4-1.4. (see Appendix B for other standards).

The Office of the Fire Marshal has become aware of inconsistencies in the application of some of these standards in various municipalities. Specifically, these inconsistencies relate to the requirement for qualifications and training of persons involved in the maintenance and installation of systems covered under the standards.

By using this guideline, it is anticipated that a more consistent application of the Fire Code will be achieved.

3.0 CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTABILITY

The following list of criteria should be taken into consideration when determining whether or not a person is properly trained or qualified, with no single factor being determinative. The sample checklist included in Appendix A can be used to compile the information and serve as a record of the evaluation.

3.1 Manufacturer's Authorization

In some cases, manufacturers or distributors will provide training and certificates of authorization to companies or persons who have successfully completed training on their specific systems. Although this type of authorization may provide ample evidence of qualification, it may also be associated with marketing/territorial agreements between the manufacturer and one service company within a geographical area. As such, they would not be available to another company regardless of their ability to perform any required maintenance on a specific system.

It is not intended that a certificate of authorization from the manufacturer be required for compliance with the Fire Code.

3.2 Past Experience and Training

Many qualified service personnel have been actively working in the fire protection system industry for years and may have received proper training and experience with a variety of different types of equipment. Checks can be made to ensure that each service company or personnel maintain a properly equipped service facility including an inventory of approved materials and components for each type of system being serviced or maintained.

3.3 Competence of Service Personnel

Service personnel should be able to address any particular concerns or questions regarding a particular fire suppression system. They should be able to demonstrate competence in the performance of any requested testing or repairs which may be required and must maintain current copies of manufacturers' installation and maintenance manuals for each brand of system that is serviced or installed.

3.4 Performance Record of Service Company

Check for evidence of satisfactory work, quick response to service calls and absence of repetitive problems.

3.5 Demonstrated Competence

Fire equipment installation and service personnel should be capable of demonstrating their abilities through their daily activities.

3.6 Qualifications of Personnel

A record of qualifications for personnel (i.e. certificates, degrees, diplomas, industry courses taken) and the company (i.e. ISO 9002, listing by recognized certification agencies) should be available for examination upon request.

3.7 References

References for current and past servicing contracts should be made available upon request.

4.0 ROLE OF FIRE DEPARTMENT

Under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 (FPPA), assistants to the Fire Marshal, who usually are the local fire prevention officers, are responsible for enforcing the Fire Code within their jurisdiction. In many codes and standards, they would be considered as the authority having jurisdiction.

Upon inspection of a premises, the fire prevention officer (inspector) may ask to see the maintenance and test records for any fire protection systems or equipment required under the Fire Code. Under Article 1.1.2.1., building owners are required to keep records of tests and corrective measures for a period of two years from the time any work was performed or tests were conducted. Upon request, these records are required to be made available to the Chief Fire Official.

Where the records are not kept up to date or the owner has not carried out the required maintenance or testing, the inspector has authority to take action under the Fire Code by requesting that the maintenance or testing be carried out or where the work has been done, the records be brought up to date. Failing this, the inspector can initiate prosecution under the FPPA.

For persons carrying out tests or work on fire alarm systems, the Chief Fire Official may request a copy of the certificate or document attesting to the person's qualifications under Article 1.1.5.3. For other systems, the inspector is not specificaliy required to verify the credentials of the service personnel.

If the records appear to be incomplete or the system does not appear to be maintained properly, then the inspector should indicate this matter on an inspection report for the owner to follow up on and correct.

5.0 ROLE OF OWNER

Under Article 1.1.1.1., the owner is responsible for compliance with the Fire Code. In entering into an agreement with a service company to carry out testing and/or maintenance, the owner should ensure that the company is qualified to do any work that may be required to keep the fire protection system in good working condition and include specific obligations for the company to satisfy the Fire Code requirements. It is important that the owner retain the service company's qualifications for future reference.

The owner may refer to the previous section to determine the service company's qualifications. In most cases, regardless of who performs the work, it is the owner's responsibility to ensure that the systems are in operating condition.

There is one exception under Subsection 1.1.5. where the Fire Code sets out qualification criteria for persons performing annual tests or maintenance on fire alarm systems. In that instance, the Fire Code places obligations on the persons doing the work in addition to the general obligations placed on the owner.

6.0 ROLE OF SERVICE COMPANY

For fire alarm systems, the service company personnel must be able to provide proof to the owner or Chief Fire Official of the qualifications required under Subsection 1.1.5. of the Fire Code [see Clause 1.1.5.3.(1)(b)].

In all other cases, the service company should provide sufficient evidence, using some or all of the criteria identified in this guideline to give the owner assurance that the company is capable of performing the work required in order for the owner to achieve compliance with the Fire Code.

APPENDIX A

SERVICE COMPANY CHECKLIST

Service Company Name:_____

Name:_____ **Date:**_____

Manufacturer's Authorization

Certificate of authorization from distributor or manufacturer

Past Experience and Training

Fire protection system industry experience Suitability of service facility test equipment Approved materials and components inventory

Competence of Service Personnel

Demonstrated knowledge in testing and repairs Current manufacturers' maintenance manuals

Performance Record of Service Company

Prompt response to service calls Customer satisfaction

Demonstrated Competence

Demonstrate abilities through daily activities

Qualifications of Personnel

Certificates, degrees, diplomas, courses

References

Current and past service contracts

Other

APPENDIX B

STANDARDS REFERENCED IN PARTS 2 AND 6 OF THE FIRE CODE

OFC Article	Applicable Standard	Subject	Applicable Clause
2.6.1.12. 2.6.1.13.	NFPA 96 1994	commercial cooking equipment	8-2.1 inspection and servicing -refers to properly trained and qualified persons
6.2.7.1.	NFPA 10 1990	portable extinguishers	4-1.4 maintenance, servicing and recharging -refers to trained persons
6.5.1.1.	NFPA 13 1994	sprinkler systems	9-1.1 refers to NFPA 25
6.8.1.1.	NFPA 11 1994	low expansion foam systems	7-3 persons shall be thoroughly trained and training shall be kept current over time
	NFPA 11A 1994	medium and high expansion foam systems	1-13.3 persons shall be thoroughly trained 1-13.3.1 training programs approved by the authority having jurisdiction shall be established
	NFPA 12 1993	carbon dioxide extinguishing systems	1-10.4 persons shall be thoroughly trained
	NFPA 12A 1992	halon 1301 systems	4-6 persons shall be thoroughly trained
	NFPA 12B 1990	halon 1211 systems	1-11.3 persons shall be thoroughly trained
	NFPA 15 1990	water spray fixed systems	6-1.1 personnel shall be trained in this work
	NFPA 16 1995	deluge foam-water systems	6-3 refers to NFPA 25
	NFPA 17 1994	dry chemical systems	9-1.3 refers to trained person who has received necessary instruction
	NFPA 17A 1994	wet chemical systems	5-1.1 refers to trained person who has received necessary instruction
	NFPA 18 1995	wetting agents	4-3.1 refers to NFPA 13, 14 and 15 for maintenance
Table 1.1.7.A.	NFPA 25 1995	testing and maintenance of water based fire systems	1-4.2 refers to personnel who have developed competence through training and experience